May 2024

**Ki te Kaipara Te Oranganui Kaipara District Council**

Please find attached DPA’s submission on the Kaipara Te Oranganui Kaipara District Council Long Term Plan 2024–2037.

Noho ora mai,

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# Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly

**We work on systemic change for the equity of disabled people**

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA) is a not-for-profit pan-impairment Disabled People’s Organisation run by and for disabled people.

We recognise:

* Māori as Tangata Whenua and [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](https://www.archives.govt.nz/discover-our-stories/the-treaty-of-waitangi) as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand;
* disabled people as experts on their own lives;
* the [Social Model of Disability](https://www.odi.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/guidance-for-policy-makes/) as the guiding principle for interpreting disability and impairment;
* the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html) as the basis for disabled people’s relationship with the State;
* the [Aotearoa New Zealand Disability Strategy](https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/) as Government agencies’ guide on disability issues; and
* the [Enabling Good Lives Principles](https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/egl-approach/principles/), [Whāia Te Ao Mārama: Māori Disability Action Plan](https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/whaia-te-ao-marama-2018-2022-maori-disability-action-plan), and [Faiva Ora: National Pasifika Disability Disability Plan](https://www.moh.govt.nz/notebook/nbbooks.nsf/0/5E544A3A23BEAECDCC2580FE007F7518/%24file/faiva-ora-2016-2021-national-pasifika-disability-plan-feb17.pdf) as avenues to disabled people gaining greater choice and control over their lives and supports.

**We drive systemic change through:**

**Rangatiratanga | Leadership:** reflecting the collective voice of disabled people, locally, nationally and internationally.

**Pārongo me te tohutohu | Information and advice:** informing and advising on policies impacting on the lives of disabled people.

**Kōkiri | Advocacy:** supporting disabled people to have a voice, including a collective voice, in society.

**Aroturuki | Monitoring:** monitoring and giving feedback on existing laws, policies and practices about and relevant to disabled people.

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DPA was influential in creating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD),[[1]](#footnote-2) a foundational document for disabled people which Aotearoa New Zealand has signed and ratified, confirming that disabled people must have the same human rights as everyone else.

All state bodies in Aotearoa New Zealand, including local and regional government, have a responsibility to uphold the principles and articles of this convention. There are a number of UNCRPD articles particularly relevant to this submission, including:

* Article 5: Non-discrimination
* Article 9: Accessibility
* Article 13: Access to justice
* Article 19: Living independently and being included in the community
* Article 20: Personal mobility
* Article 29: Participation in political and public life.

## Aotearoa New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016–2026

Since ratifying the UNCRPD, the Aotearoa New Zealand Government has established a Disability Strategy[[2]](#footnote-3) to guide the work of government agencies on disability issues.

The vision is that Aotearoa New Zealand be a non-disabling society, where disabled people have equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations, and that all of Aotearoa New Zealand works together to make this happen.

The Strategy identifies eight outcome areas contributing to achieving this vision. There are a number of Strategy outcomes particularly relevant to this submission, including:

* Outcome 5 – Accessibility
* Outcome 6 – Attitudes
* Outcome 7 – Choice and Control
* Outcome 8 – Leadership

# The submission

DPA would firstly like to acknowledge the Council staff and the community efforts after Cyclone Gabriel and other severe weather events. DPA recognises that Council’s focus is on recovery and rebuilding after these extreme weather events hit Kaipara.

DPA’s roles is to advocate for the inclusion of disabled people within their communities and supports working within the prosperous economy, involvement in our vibrant communities and living in a healthy environment that recognises mana whenua and tangata whenua as kaitiaki.

## System Outcomes: Accessibility

Accessibility is a core principle of the UNCRPD, and a key outcome of the Aotearoa New Zealand Disability Strategy. It affects every area of disabled people’s lives, from the homes we live in, the places we work and the extent to which we can move around our communities. It also has a major impact on disabled people’s level of risk and ability to recover following severe weather events.

DPA supports appropriate development within sustainable environmental limits to protect the health, wellbeing, and economic opportunities of the disabled community in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Speaking Up for Disabled

DPA’s role is to remind people and organisations of the importance of accessibility for our disability communities. Even when we have a seat at the table, our voices often go unheard or are not listened to. This is an opportunity to ensure that they are accessible for all with an ever-ageing population in Northland.

DPA would raise the concern that smarter, cheaper and faster does not always lead to high quality work. Contractors delivering best value for money and delivering high quality work are not always synonymous. It is important to us to ensure that the services delivered to disabled meet accessibility guidelines.

DPA would also like to acknowledge Kaipara District Council as one of the few Councils that has committed to the guidelines of Making Te Tai Tokerau Accessible.[[3]](#footnote-4)

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| **Recommendation 1:** that KDC continues its commitment to the guidelines of making Te Tai Tokerau accessible. |

### Climate adaptation

Disabled people are one of the groups most at risk from climate change[[4]](#footnote-5). Many examples exist of disabled people being highly impacted by urban planning failing to provide for the impact of climate change occurring across low-lying communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our infrastructure is already degraded from severe weather events and a shortage of central government funding for infrastructure investment. Kaipara is facing major risks from climate change.

DPA supports KDC’s approach to climate adaptation and mitigation planning with the continued work of the Joint Climate Change Adaptation Committee for Northland and Climate Adaptation Te Tai Tokerau.

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| **Recommendation 2:** that the impact of climate change on disabled people is considered with the ongoing work of the Joint Climate Change Adaptation Committee for Northland and Climate Adaptation Te Tai Tokerau. |

### Flood Protection

Low-lying areas are often at greater risk from flooding, sea level rise and/or liquefaction in an earthquake but because they are often more accessible and affordable, a higher proportion of disabled people live in these areas.

Given that 40% of Kainga Ora clients are disabled in some way, this means that in many places social housing, and disabled people, are being effectively placed in harm’s way. So those least able to avoid or recover from a natural disaster are most at risk of losing everything.

Preventing this situation re-occurring in the future will require planning for climate adaptive communities and places that are also accessible for disabled people. As a recent news article states “Floods are inevitable. Flood disasters are not”.[[5]](#footnote-6)

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| **Recommendation 3:** that the KDC include in their planning the feedback from their Disability Advisory Group and the disability community after the severe weather events. |

### Water Health

DPA supports Council partnership with Te Tai Tokerau Water Trust for the Dargaville Water Supply. We withhold commenting on the upgrading the Waiatua Dam as we do not have the environmental impact report with a cost analysis for the upgrade. Our priority is the wellbeing of disabled people, so clean and safe water is a necessity.

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| **Recommendation 4:** that KDC partners with Te Tai Tokerau Water Trust to ensure clean and safe water for the disabled community. |

### Emergency Preparedness and Natural Hazards

There is a need for all decision makers to take steps to uphold the wellbeing of our disabled community who are affected by natural disasters. Severe weather events also cause substantial infrastructure damage. The impact that weather-enforced homelessness has had on disabled people is further exacerbated by the dire shortage of accessible housing.

DPA requests that KDC establish a voluntary register for people with disabilities to identify special requirements in case of emergency or evacuation (e.g. medical, pets, equipment, mobility or sensory) with support from WDC, NRC and CDEM. People also need to know where their nearest or most appropriate accessible evacuation centre is, who to contact, and how to contact or mobilise themselves and others if access is blocked and/or phones are down with this information being publicised through WDC, disabled persons organisations, Tai Tokerau disability providers and personal networks.

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| **Recommendation 5:** that the KDC factor into their emergency preparedness and planning for natural disasters the current shortage of accessible emergency housing for disabled people.  |
| **Recommendation 6:** that KDC establish a voluntary register for disabled people to identify special requirements in case of emergency or evacuation and publicise information about emergency preparedness for disabled people through NRC, disabled persons organisations, Tai Tokerau disability providers and personal networks. |

### Open Spaces

DPA highlights the importance of sporting facilities and keeping them open as several Northland disability sports groups, organisations and community groups use these facilities.

Dargaville and Mangawhai sports and recreational spaces and Urlich Park need to be accessible. DPA requests that with the rebuild of new spaces that accessibility be at the forefront of the conversation for environmental planners and landscape architects. Many disabled parent/s with non-disabled children, disabled children with non-disabled parents or disabled parents and disabled children find the community spaces to be inaccessible for them.

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| **Recommendation 7:** that KDC ensure that all their facilities are accessible and built on universal design principles. |
| **Recommendation 8:** that the concept of universal design is regularly discussed when KDC work with their environmental planners and landscape architects. |

### Built Spaces

Mangawhai Museum is an accessible venue that is often discussed by disabled locally and overseas. DPA sees this as a huge benefit to Mangawhai in attracting disabled visitors from Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas.

We have been advised that Dargaville Sportsville is accessible for both manual and electric wheelchair users. It would benefit Dargaville Sportsville to have accessibility information including photos on their website.

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| **Recommendation 9:** that Council built spaces be accessible for local disabled people and disabled visitors from Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas. |

### Community Hubs

DPA supports the community hubs for Dargaville and Mangawhai include a library, digital facilities, meeting rooms and a multi-purpose flexible space that is designed based on universal design for the disabled community and an ageing population. It is important that any Council facilities be accessible for all.

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| **Recommendation 10:** that community hubs be accessible spaces based on universal design for the disabled community and an ageing population. |

### Transport Network

The provision of accessible public transport services is important for disabled people in terms of the ability to undertake social connection, inclusion and participation in their communities.

Northland has major transport network repairs ahead and its repair is a number one priority to ensure disabled people are not isolated in rural areas far from many necessary services.

DPA supports resilient roads and addressing the causes of damage, such as drainage issues. It is also important to remember that the structures on these roads such as seawalls, bridges and other infrastructure are accessible and developed based on the concept of universal design.

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| **Recommendation 11:** that the development of any new transport infrastructure be designed based on universal design principles. |

### Rates

Disabled people in Northland face an increased risk of living in poverty largely due to lower incomes and extra resource requirements compared to non-disabled people[[6]](#footnote-7). Statistics also show that disabled New Zealanders are grossly overrepresented in unemployment rates; two-thirds of disabled people earn less than $30,000 per annum, increasing the likelihood of poor socio-economic outcomes[[7]](#footnote-8).

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| **Recommendation 12** that KDC make their rates rebates process more accessible for disabled people to apply. |
| **Recommendation 13:** that KDC consider that disabled people tend to be low income so ensuring the rating system and rates are equitable and fair. |

### Leadership

DPA asks that all council decision-making bodies consider the needs of disabled people and that engagement processes consult with disabled people and their representative organisations.

Partnership of Māori disabled in the space of mana whenua and kaitiakitanga is key as Northland is the birthplace of our nation.

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| **Recommendation 14:** thatall council decision-making bodies be required to consider the needs of disabled and Māori disabled people and that engagement processes consult with disabled people and their representative organisations. |

1. United Nations. (2006). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.* Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Office for Disability Issues. (2016). *Aotearoa New Zealand Disability Strategy.* Retrieved from: https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Kaipara District Council. (2022). *Making Te Taitokerau Accessible Guidance Booklet 2022.* <https://www.kaipara.govt.nz/uploads/community-planning/Community%20Events/2022%20Making%20Te%20Tai%20Tokerau%20accessible%20-%20Guidance%20Booklet.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Schulte, C. (2020, March 28). People With Disabilities Needed in Fight Against Climate Change. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/28/people-disabilities-needed-fight-against-climate-change#:~:text=People%20with%20disabilities%20are%20at,said%20in%20a%20recent%20report>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Smith, R. (February 2023, 3). *Floods are inevitable, flood disasters are not.* Stuff website. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/131138570/floods-are-inevitable-flood-disasters-are-not> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Wilkinson-Meyers et al. (2015). To live an ordinary life: resource needs and additional costs for people with a physical impairment. Disability & Society, 30(7), 976-990. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. King, P. T. (2019). Māori with Lived Experience of Disability Part II. Commissioned by the Waitangi Tribunal. Retrieved from <https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_150473583/Wai%202575%2C%20B023.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)